Status of the red-breasted merganser in India based on two historical occurrences and recent sightings

Anindya Naskar[1,2], Amitava Majumder[1] and Gopinathan Maheswaran[1,*]

[1]Zoological Survey of India, M-Block, New Alipore, Kolkata 700 053, India
[2]Department of Zoology, University of Calcutta, Kolkata 700 019, India

The red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* has a widespread global distribution with a stable population and is considered a winter vagrant in South Asia. Since 2016, this species has been recorded six times from many states in India, prompting us to analyse the specimens of the species deposited in the Zoological Survey of India's National Zoological Collections. From historical collection records and present sighting trends, it can be assumed that the species might be regularly visiting wetlands in India but in scarce numbers, thereby either escaping from the attention of birders or misidentifying the individuals as common merganser in the Himalayan terai. The implication of the present study is an update to the checklist of birds in India.

Keywords: Distribution, *Mergus serrator*, museum specimens, red-breasted merganser.